reduced from 77 to 67. In Eastern Coalfields Limited (ECL) areas 5 fire projects have been completed. The Master Plan dealing with fire, subsidence and rehabilitation in Jharia and Raniganj Coalfields within the leasehold of BCCL and ECL involves control of 67 fires through 45 projects in Jharia Coalfield and dealing with 7 fires through 7 projects in Raniganj Coalfield areas. The suggested fire controlling technologies are excavation of material on fire; surface sealing and blanketing; isolation by trenching and backfilling; construction of grout barrier and stabilization against rail/road and jore; filling opencast highwall, shafts, inclines and other subsided areas; cooling and excavation of fire material and filling; blind flushing with sand/cement/fly ash/grout mixture; cooling by water curtain/infiltration ponds; and seam sealing, tunnel etc.

(b) to (c) Illegal mining mostly takes place in old and abandoned mines, small and isolated patches, areas situated at remote/isolated places from mines, which are scattered over a large area, exposed coal seams and also in areas not in the leasehold areas of public sector coal companies. Due to illegal mining, at times subsidence occurs. Illegal mining is a state subject and the law and order authorities of the concerned State Government are continuously being approached by the Coal Companies to prevent this menace. Ministry of Coal had issued instructions on various occasions in the past to the State Governments of the coal producing States for setting up and effective mechanism to check illegal mining. The States were also requested to give appropriate directions to the concerned authorities to take effective steps to check such illegal activities at places where illegal mining is believed to be taking place. The State Governments were also requested to consider framing of suitable rules, if not already done, under the provisions of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 to strengthen the District authorities in curbing such illegal activities.

Coal linkages for Karnataka projects

3200. SHRI RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether two proposals of the Karnataka Government for providing coal linkages for projects to be commissioned in Gulbarga and Belgaum districts of the State, the applications for which were duly filed with required fee, had been received in June and August, 2008, respectively; and

(b) if so, by when the proposals are likely to be cleared?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI SHRIPRAKASH JAISWAL): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The applications for the grant of coal linkage for Jewargi TPS (1000-1320MW), Jewargi, Gulbarga, Karnataka and Ghataprabha TPS (1000-1320MW), Ghataprabha, Belgaum, Karnataka of M/s. Power Company of Karnataka Limited (PCKL) [Government of Karnataka undertaking] were received in the Ministry of Coal in the month of

June 2008 and August 2008 respectively and the same have been forwarded to Ministry of Power for furnishing their comments. Based on the recommendation of Ministry of Power, the above proposals will be placed before the Standing Linkage Committee (Long-term) [SCL(LT)] for power for consideration.

Import of coal

†3201. SHRI AMIR ALAM KHAN: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether coal is imported on a large scale because of sub-standard heat value of that found in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the quantity of coal imported in metric tonnes during the last three years, year-wise;

(d) the total amount being incurred on import of coal; and

(e) whether Government proposes to abolish import duty on coal so that the domestic steel, power and cement companies could get due returns?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI SHRIPRAKASH JAISWAL): (a) and (b) Primarily, due to gap in demand and indigenous availability of high grade coal and economic considerations, the concerned user industries are importing coal which is placed under Open General Licence (OGL) category. Some coal is also being imported by the thermal power stations to meet environmental norms. The production of coal has been increasing significantly over the years but the quality of coal produced by the major producer *i.e.* Coal India Limited (CIL) is largely of lower grade *i.e.* E and F. During the year 2008-09, CIL produced about 68% of total coal pertaining to these lower grades.

(c) and (d) Import of coal during last three years both in quantity and value (CIF Value) is given below:—

Year	Quantity (Million Tonnes)	Import (Rs. in Crore)
2006-07	43.081	16689
2007-08	49.794	20738
2008-09 (Upto January, 2009)	45.907	32691

(e) No, Sir. At present, there is nil duty on imported coking coal and 5% duty on imported non-coking coal.

Regulations for mega mergers

3202. SHRI N.R. GOVINDARAJAR: Will the Minister of CORPORATE AFFAIRS of be pleased to state:

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.